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SUBJECT: CORRECTED COPY: U.S. TEAM CONSULTS WITH ISAF
PARTNERS ON AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: CDA John Heffern. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S/REL ISAF) This cable is a corrected copy including additional comments by the Deputy Assistant to the President and the Vice President's National Security Advisor, Tony Blinken.

12. (S/REL ISAF) SUMMARY: On November 5, a senior level USG interagency team consulted with NATO Allies and non-NATO ISAF troop contributing countries on the way ahead in Afghanistan, including how to respond to GEN McChrystal's assessment and resource request. The U.S. team stressed that the President remained committed to the international effort in Afghanistan, informing ISAF members that all options being considered by the President include an increase in our military and civilian investment. They said that it was the size and nature of the increase that was still under discussion, adding that an announcement of a decision would be made after President Obama's upcoming trip to Asia. Several key themes emerged from the discussion with Allies and non-NATO ISAF troop contributors, including:

-- there was general support for GEN McChrystal's assessment and its call for a population-centric counter-insurgency approach;

-- no Allies or partners, with the possible exception of the Dutch, were considering doing less and a number were considering how they might do more;

-- while ISAF members generally agreed on the need to grow the Afghan National Security Forces, they shared U.S. questions about how large it should grow, whether it would be sustainable, and who would pay for it;

-- on civilian coordination, Allies and partners recognized the need for improved civilian coordination and stressed the importance of maintaining and strengthening the UN's role; and

-- ISAF members wanted a better sense of international expectations of Afghan President Karzai in his second term.

NATO Secretary General Rasmussen concluded the meeting by strongly arguing that, if the U.S. intended to step forward with additional contributions to the ISAF mission, other Allies and partners also needed to increase their contributions, ideally in the same time-frame as Washington.
END SUMMARY

13. (S/REL ISAF) On November 5, a senior level USG interagency team consulted with Allies and non-NATO ISAF troop contributing countries about the situation in Afghanistan, as well as about how to respond to the assessment and associated resource request of GEN McChrystal, COMISAF. The U.S. team included Tony Blinken, Deputy Assistant to the President and the Vice President's National Security Advisor, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Policy) Michele Flournoy, State Department Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Paul Jones, and Joint Staff Director for Operations LTG John M. Paxton.

U.S. To Increase Investment; Expect Others To Do Same

14. (S/REL ISAF) Blinken said that the team had traveled to NATO at the President's request to provide an update on U.S. deliberations, solicit Allied and Partner recommendations and

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concerns, and to discuss what more ISAF could do in Afghanistan. He reiterated that the President's core goal remained to disrupt, dismantle, and eventually defeat Al Qaeda, and prevent its return to Afghanistan and Pakistan. He noted that the U.S. is committed to the international effort in Afghanistan. He informed ISAF members that all the options being considered by the President include an increase in our military and civilian investment in Afghanistan. He also stressed the central importance of Pakistan to regional and international security, given the presence of Al Qaeda and nuclear weapons, noting that while ISAF's mandate does not extend to Pakistan, the interests of every ISAF partner clearly do. Flournoy said that a decision by the President would likely be made in the next few weeks. Both Blinken and Flournoy stressed that the U.S. expected its ISAF partners to also come forward with additional resources. Flournoy said the Administration hoped that Allies and partners would be prepared to announce their support and additional contributions immediately following the President's announcement. She asked nations to focus additional resource contributions, primarily, in the North and West. She also expressed the hope that nations would remove national caveats, allowing for greater flexibility in how their troops could be deployed and used in Afghanistan.

ANSF Growth: Yes, But How Much and How Fast

15. (S/REL ISAF) Flournoy said that Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) acceleration and growth is a key element in White House deliberations. She said the White House was deciding between two future directions with regard to building the ANSF: setting an ambitious long-term growth target or setting annual targets. The annual targets would require regular re-evaluation of progress. Flournoy called for clear and strong support to the ANSF and encouraged nations to increase the teamwork, troops, trainers and contributions to the Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund. She was frank in describing the ANA Trust Fund as "woefully inadequate in the size and dollars deposited," calling on nations to stand by their previous commitments. Overall, she welcomed ideas and feedback from nations on sustaining, training, equipping, and financing the growth of the ANSF.

16. (S/REL ISAF) In response, Italy said it agreed on the need

to grow the ANSF, but asked nations to consider the realistic absorption capacity of the Afghan government to build and sustain its security forces at an accelerated rate. Italy said it was important to focus on the quality as well as the quantity of an ANSF buildup, as well as make sure ISAF properly vetted candidates for the ANSF to avoid insurgency infiltration. Many nations said reinforcing the ANSF was a priority and Estonia suggested a "conscript army" in addition to building a professional ANSF as a creative way to reach an accelerated ANSF goal.

Partnering and Unity Of Effort Are Critical

¶7. (S/REL ISAF) LtGen Paxton said that "partnering" was a critical element of McChrystal's population-focused assessment. In his view, long-term success was contingent upon developing Afghan relationships and refining ISAF's cultural understanding of the needs of the Afghan people. The UK demonstrated particular resolve and commitment during the discussion. Despite the tragic killing of five British troops by an Afghan security officer, the UK delegate reiterated

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strong support for increases in ANSF, geographical flexibility, and partnering. Spain said it was increasing the size of its headquarters in Badghis as a way to expand partnering and create unity of effort with ANSF in the West. Norway agreed the goal of partnering with ANSF was paramount but expressed some hesitation, and asked for additional details on what partnering would entail, including implications for troop numbers, funding, and other resources.

¶8. (S/REL ISAF) Paxton also stressed the importance of unity of effort from all the military actors on the ground, focusing on battlespace owner control of and support for all units in their area of operations, to include Operational Mentor Liaison Teams and Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Canada supported Paxton's view that unity of effort was important and asked nations to reduce or eliminate national caveats. Spain and Canada both agreed that it was important for nations to speak with one voice and coordinate public messages in capitals.

A Civilian Counterpart To McChrystal?

¶9. (S/REL NATO) Paul Jones noted the need for GEN McChrystal to have a counterpart to coordinate the civilian aspects of the mission. At the same time, he said that the United States remained committed to strengthening the leading role of the UN. Allies and partners were cautious about the proposal for a civilian counterpart to McChrystal. While recognizing the need for improved civilian coordination, they warned that attempts to create such a civilian counterpart to McChrystal could undermine the UN's leading role -- which they saw as paramount. The Dutch delegate asked how one could clearly distinguish between the responsibilities of a civilian counterpart to COMISAF and those of UNAMA.

Don't Forget Pakistan

¶10. (S/REL ISAF) Blinken and Jones emphasized that Washington sees Pakistan and Afghanistan as interdependent, requiring a common regional strategy. Italy and Turkey led ISAF members in calling for a strengthening of the relationship with Pakistan. Portugal and New Zealand also said that the Afghan and Pakistani military relationship needed to improve in order to strengthen the regional relationship, particularly through ISAF-led support to interoperability at the evolving border control checkpoints.

A Snapshot Of ISAF Views

¶11. (S/REL ISAF) In their interventions, Allies and non-NATO troop contributors to ISAF made various points. Some of the comments include:

-- Albania said that the new Karzai administration must do more to increase good governance and security for all Afghans for the next five years. Albania committed to sustaining its troop levels, recently doubled to 280.

-- Australia said it would remain committed "to the long haul" as it had pledged USD 200 million over five years to the ANA Trust Fund and planned to increase its civilian presence in the South. Australia thanked Rasmussen for his efforts to be more inclusive of non-NATO partners in NATO

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decision-making through adopting an ISAF format and encouraged nations to share best practices on how their Provincial Reconstruction Teams operate and to move more civilians into the field.

-- Canada and The Netherlands asked if NATO had the right civilian counterpart for the military chain of command and whether McChrystal's population-centric approach left huge swaths of (sometimes strategic) land unprotected. Flournoy suggested that special operations forces could work with local community-based forces to secure areas outside of populations centers. Moreover, she clarified that we would not neglect population areas with less force density.

-- Denmark noted that the length of Washington's deliberations were creating a sense of uncertainty in the international community about the future direction of the Afghanistan mission and urged a decision soon.

-- France said it was important to have the right civ-mil strategy in order to protect the civilian population. However, President Sarkozy was not considering additional reinforcements.

-- Germany said it supported ANSF development but requested more information on the Afghan government's role in partnering. Germany said that Berlin was committed to ANSF development as evidenced by its recent 50 million Euro contribution to the ANA Trust Fund. However, he was skeptical of a German troop increase right now due to a tight Bundestag schedule, possibly resulting in a Berlin "roll over" of current force levels for now. He also suggested Berlin would wait until after an international conference early next year before making a final decision on additional forces.

-- Georgia said that it stood ready to support ISAF-related transit across its territory.

-- Italy supported troop increases and recognized building the ANSF as key. Italy said ISAF has a role in reintegration at the local level that could facilitate intelligence sharing and offer practical support. However, Italy asked for a prioritization of the troop resources that would be required, stating that the political reality in capitals would lead to resource constraints. Italy also supported the need to clarify the international community's expectations of Karzai in his second term, specifically asking that the Afghan government refrain from public criticisms of ISAF.

-- Hungary viewed the UN's repositioning of civilians as a radical withdrawal from Afghanistan and joined other nations by asking how the international community could best coordinate civilian efforts amid a diminishing UN presence. Hungary was joined by Norway and other nations in the view that NATO should have a supportive and background role to the UN in the coordination of civilian efforts.

-- Poland said that it was prepared to do more if asked, but

stressed that the resource requirements needed would also have to be taken into consideration. Poland made specific reference to its need for Mine Resistance Ambushed Protected Vehicles (MRAPS) and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

-- Portugal said that it would raise its military position in ISAF early next year.

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-- Spain said that it supported the general thrust of the McChrystal assessment, particularly the civ-mil approach.

-- Sweden said that it supported McChrystal's population-centric approach and also agreed on the need to focus on governance.

-- Turkey said Karzai must re-create national unity among Afghans and establish a national reconciliation and reintegration policy. Turkey urged the international community to support Karzai in that effort. Turkey also noted the importance of not undermining Karzai by providing consistent but subtle advice in private on anti-corruption.

-- The UK asked SecGen Rasmussen to approach the UN to discuss possible increased ISAF support to UNAMA to protect UN personnel and allow the UN to maintain its presence. The SecGen said he would.

Rasmussen Closes Out Strong

¶12. (S/REL ISAF) NATO Secretary General Rasmussen identified three challenges to the Afghanistan mission: declining public support in troop contributing countries and, thus, the increasing need to formulate "transition" strategy; weak Afghan governance; the perception that the international community was supporting a government lacking legitimacy; and the challenge for nations to decide on the right balance of increased troop contributions. The SYG agreed with Italy and said that the political realities and current budget constraints in capitals make the mission in Afghanistan unpopular. However, he also pointed out the upcoming decision of the U.S. President would also not be popular among the American people, reiterating the need for nations to contribute more troops, trainers, trust funds, civilian experts, and expanded troop flexibility. Rasmussen encouraged all nations to view multilateralism as a two-way street, pressuring nations to step up to the plate and match U.S. contributions. U.S. presence at NATO was a reflection of a multilateral approach, in the spirit of true partnership. The SYG concluded that "We look forward to the 'white smoke' from Washington."

¶13. (SBU) Deputy SRAP Paul Jones did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.
DAALDER